

**Interagency Wildfire Management Team
Meeting Notes
September 24, 2003**

Diana Webb (Policy Office, LANL) announced that she has stepped down from her seven-year role as team chair of the IWMT. She will be succeeded by Deputy Los Alamos County Fire Chief, Doug Tucker. There was also an announcement in the Lab Director's Weekly Summary (September 22-26, 2003) that discussed the change in leadership. Diana has been an active member in the IWMT since its formation in 1996, in the wake of the Dome Fire. The IWMT was formed by Diana, Doug and others to provide an interagency approach to address wildfire threats in the community and has been instrumental in building regional trust among the Lab's neighbors. The IWMT consists of personnel from Los Alamos County, the US Forest Service, the National Park Service, the National Nuclear Safety Administration, the State of New Mexico, San Ildefonso and Santa Clara Pueblos, private organizations, and several divisions of the Laboratory. The first of its kind, the IWMT has been emulated in other areas of the country as a role model for interagency cooperation.

Doug Tucker (Los Alamos County Fire Department) thanked Diana for her role in forming the IWMT and for her long service to the team. Doug commended the members of the IWMT for their proactive attitude and their commitment to making the organization a success. Doug feels that the most important function of the IWMT is to facilitate results. As Doug's first official act, he submitted a User Survey, which is attached to these notes, and asked each member to consider the survey questions and submit responses to TuckerD@lac.losalamos.nm.us.

Gene Darling (Emergency Management and Response, LANL) also commended Diana for her service to the IWMT and supported the appointment of Doug to serve as the new Chair. In addition, Gene is currently serving as the Chair of the Santa Fe Zone Coordinating Group. Gene also announced that the fire danger had returned to high levels.

Rob Farris, Glen Trehern and Bill Gorman (Fire Protection Group, LANL) along with Phoebe Suina (Infrastructure Projects, LANL), Todd Haagenstad, Pat Valerio, Randy Balice and Gil Gonzales (Ecology Group, LANL), and John Loughhead (TA-54 Facility Management, LANL) recently reviewed the current status of wildfire hazards adjacent to facilities at TA-54. This survey was prompted by the results of comparative wildfire hazard assessments conducted for the LANL Site-wide Environmental Impact Statement and after the completion of the Cerro Grande Rehabilitation Project. Comparisons of these two results did not show a significant reduction in wildfire hazards adjacent to some of the facilities at TA-54. The final Qualitative Assessment of Wildfire-Induced Radiological Risk report will be completed in October and a set of wildfire hazard reduction recommendations for TA-54 will be provided for management consideration.

Randy Balice (Ecology Group, LANL) was recently interviewed for radio broadcasts, to be aired on KFSR and KUNM, concerning mortality to piñon, and the effects of mortality on wildfire hazards, soil erosion and other ecosystem responses. Randy has also been summarizing field data and submitting it to Rod Linn for fire behavior modeling with Firetec.

Susan DiMauro (Davey Resource Group) reported that the Los Alamos County Defensible Space Project is beginning to close their operations. Work in the Los Alamos townsite will be completed this week, and work in White Rock will finish by the end of October.

Leslie Hansen (Ecology Group, LANL) is incorporating comments to the internal review draft of the LANL Wildland Fire Management Plan. This updated draft document, which is based on DOE guidance, will be submitted to the LANL Operations Directorate and DOE Los Alamos Area Organization on September 30.

Liz English (Infrastructure Projects, LANL) reported on the progress toward completion and closure of the Cerro Grande Rehabilitation Project and on additional work that is being prioritized for the next year.

The Climate Assessment for the Southwest project (CLIMAS), located at the Institute for the Study of Planet Earth, University of Arizona, reports through its Southwest Climate Outlook for September 2003 that the fire danger is near normal for the entire region. Hydrological drought continues to be an enormous concern for the Southwest. Most New Mexico river basins remain in emergency drought status. The most likely scenario is that autumn rainfall will not contribute significantly to reservoir recovery over most of the region. Seasonal temperature forecasts indicate increased probabilities of above-average temperatures and near-normal precipitation levels across Arizona and most of New Mexico through the winter months. For more information, see <http://www.ispe.arizona.edu/climas/forecasts.html>

The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center (www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov) reports that current atmospheric and oceanic conditions in the tropical Pacific are near average and do not support the development of either La Niña or El Niño in the next few months. Based on current conditions and recent observed trends, it is most likely that near average (ENSO-neutral) conditions will continue in the tropical Pacific through the Northern Hemisphere winter 2003-2004. However, due to neutral ENSO conditions, seasonal climate forecasts have a high degree of uncertainty.

The next IWMT meeting will be at 9:30 AM on Wednesday, October 8, at TA-21, Building 210 in the RRES-ECO Conference Room (142). The IWMT meets every other week and these meetings are open to the public. Contact Randy Balice (balice@lanl.gov, 665-1270) for further information, or to get on the distribution list for these meeting notes.